

The Protector and Protestantism.

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power which he had wielded so arbitrarily against both Papists and Protestants passed, for the brief period of his son's reign, to the Protestant party. Protestantism had now, for a short interval, the Government on its side, and the Government was to reform the doctrine and practice of the Church as well as its constitution. The new reign was inaugurated by the repeal of some of the more tyrannical statutes. The treason and heresy laws and the law of Proclamations were erased from the statute-book. There was a rebound from the despotic pressure of the last thirty years, but there was no inauguration of good government. Somerset, who got himself acknowledged Protector of the realm for the boy king, had popular sympathies and professed a love of liberty. "The Protector," says Burnet, "seemed much concerned for the commons, and often spoke against the oppression of landlords. He was naturally just and compassionate, and so did heartily espouse the cause of the poor people, which made the nobility and gentry hate him much." He was a brilliant general, but an indifferent statesman, and the pressure of the war with Scotland and France, and the maladministration, which he was incapable of checking, nullified his good intentions. His administration may be described as a series of failures, rendered almost inevitable by the accumulation of abuses of Henry's reign, and aggravated by a rash and sanguine temperament. The successful general is not usually the successful ruler. His fiscal policy, which debased the coinage and raised the price of food, soured the masses; his religious policy, which swept away usages dear to the ignorant rustics, co-operated with their social grievances to exasperate them once more into rebellion. Somerset lost his office and then his life in the midst of the misery and anarchy, of which Northumberland, who succeeded him in the direction of affairs, took advantage to ruin him. Contention over rival doctrines had begotten a religion which was only skin-deep in the higher classes, who favoured because they profited by Protestantism. "The people," wrote Hooper, "are oppressed by the tyranny of the nobles; England is full of misery." Their only answer to the social questions that demanded a solution with equal

insistence was the neglect and oppression of the poor. Latimer had only too good reason to raise his